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# ELLERY QUEEN'S *Mystery Magazine*®

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE	Jack Ritchie	6
COMPANION PLANTING	Ernest Savage	16
FEEDBACK	T. M. Adams	27
THE AXE OF ELISHA	John F. Suter	32
ASSIGNMENT: ENIGMA	Anthony Circus	44
TUNNEL RAT	Lee Schultz	59
GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN	Bonnie J. Cissell	62
NEIGHBORS ARE COMPLAINING	James C. Lamanna, Jr.	65
DEATH BY DEFAULT	Carol Myers Martin	67
SWAMP BEAST	John C. Boland	71
THE GOOD SAMARITAN	Isaac Asimov	89
THE INHERITANCE	Author Unknown	104
CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH	George Baxt	107
THE TINKLING FOOTFALL	Charles Norman	120
BORN GAMBLER	Thomas Walsh	128
THE PROBLEM OF THE PILGRIMS WINDMILL	Edward D. Hoch	142
MYSTERY NEWSLETTER	R. E. Porter & Chris Steinbrunner	82
THE JURY BOX	Jon L. Breen	87

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a **NEW Henry-and-Ralph** story by

**JACK RITCHIE**

*When Henry Turnbuckle, Detective Sergeant MPD, starts theorizing and deducing, he's a wiz on wheels. His conclusions are sometimes so startling they leave his partner Ralph speechless. They will have the same awesome effect on you . . .*

*Rex Stout once told your Editor (or was it Erle Stanley Gardner who told me?) that someone proposed that Nero Wolfe and Perry Mason join forces in solving a murder case. Rex said he would agree—if Della Street (Perry Mason's Girl Friday) would spend a weekend in Atlantic City with Archie Goodwin (Nero Wolfe's Man Friday). Unfortunately for all concerned (including readers the world over) nothing came of the proposal. But the anecdote now suggests a weird notion: suppose Jack Ritchie's Henry Turnbuckle joined forces with Robert L. Fish's Schlock Homes, setting up a private detective agency. Think of it: the Turnbuckle theories meshed with the Homes hypotheses—wow!*

## **MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE**

by **JACK RITCHIE**

**T**he fingerprint and medical people were still busy in the living room, so I wandered through the apartment again. In the bedroom I re-studied the empty jewel case on the vanity table and the rifled purse.

The burglar-murderer had left behind three uncashed paychecks made out in the name of Linda Baumgartner by Zander Plumbing Supplies, Inc.

I moved on to the kitchenette and peered into the refrigerator. I was examining cupboard contents when Ralph came into the room.

© 1980 by Jack Ritchie.

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"Henry, they took the body away. It's now safe to come into the living room."

I regarded him coldly. "Ralph, I have seen dead bodies before. I have never shirked my ocular duty. I simply do not revel in it."

The victim had been one Linda Baumgartner, age 24. She appeared to have been fatally struck over the head with a ceramic piggy bank well stocked with Susan B. Anthony dollars. The act of the murder had broken the bank and scattered the coins about the living room.

Miss Baumgartner's body had been attired in a white blouse, black slacks, and mules. Near her body lay a nearly full, plastic bottle of laundry detergent and a pyrex measuring cup.

"Well, Henry," Ralph said. "What do you make of this?"

"Ralph, let me reconstruct the crime, from pizza to pizza, so to speak. The time was approximately eight thirty and Miss Baumgartner experienced hunger pains. She phoned Herrmann's Pizza Palace and ordered one of his concoctions.

"Knowing that pizzas are seldom delivered pronto, she felt that she had time enough to take a basket of laundry down to the basement washing machine. She took the elevator with her basket, the laundry, the bottle of detergent, and the measuring cup.

"While she was gone, our intruder appeared. I imagine that it is his *modus operandi* to go about ringing apartment doorbells. If someone answers, he makes some excuse, possibly claiming to have the wrong apartment. However, if no one answers, he assumes with fair accuracy that no one is home. He then produces his ring of versatile keys and makes an entry. If he is a man after readily pocketable items—that is, cash and jewelry, eschewing heavier and bulkier typewriters, TV sets, and food processors—a knowledgeable burglar can sweep through an apartment in a matter of minutes.

"Meanwhile, downstairs in the basement laundry, Miss Baumgartner put her wash into the machine, measured and poured the detergent, and inserted the necessary coinage to permit the machine's wash cycle to commence. She then returned to her fourth-floor apartment, carrying the bottle of detergent and the measuring cup, but leaving behind the battered, disintegrating, plastic laundry basket."

"Hold it, Henry. What makes you so positive that this laundry basket which you haven't seen is battered, disintegrating, and plastic?"

I smiled. "Ralph, in these days of the malleable molecule, *wicker*

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laundry baskets are difficult to find. Rare prizes. Almost extinct. If one possesses such a treasure, battered or not, one does not leave that item in a public laundry room where it might be stolen in one's absence. And if this laundry basket were still new, though plastic, one would also bring it back to the apartment for the same reason. But since there is no laundry basket of any description in this apartment, we must conclude that Miss Baumgartner's laundry basket was worn, battered, and disintegrating plastic. It was a bother to carry it up and down again from her apartment, so she simply left it there. If it is stolen, so what?"

"That's downright brilliant, Henry."

I nodded. "And so returning to her apartment, she surprised the burglar, possibly in the act of stuffing the piggy bank into his zipper bag. In a panic he struck Miss Baumgartner with that item, the bank, and fled from the apartment, in the process almost bowling over the man who had come to deliver the pizza."

Ralph and I went back into the living room. The fingerprint men were still at it, though I doubted that they would come up with anything, since our burglar had been described as wearing gloves.

The pizza in question, still in its cardboard, heat-retaining carton, now reposed on a side table. The pizza delivery man, attired in a white uniform and a natty overseas cap, was large-eyed and doubtless awed by police procedure.

I attempted to put him at his ease.

"What kind of pizza is it?"

He looked at the object in question. "A deli. Sausage, green peppers, olives, mushrooms, onions, anchovies. The works."

I thought about that for a moment. Was there anything significant in that, and if so, what?

"Can you tell us what happened again?" I asked. "I realize that you have given us your story several times before, but we detectives like to go over testimony again and again, always on the alert for any discrepancies."

He shrugged. "Sure. Well, there's not really too much. I came out of the elevator with the pizza when this character comes rushing out of the apartment, leaving the door open. He almost knocks me over and then he rushed down the fire stairs. I guess that after what he'd just done, he didn't want to wait for anything as slow as an elevator."

I agreed.

"Well, I saw this lady lying on the floor and all that blood. So I

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rushed downstairs to the superintendent's apartment and told them it's murder."

The superintendent and his wife had been introduced as Mr. and Mrs. Franklin. He was small, bald, and had neutrally blue eyes. She was firm-jawed, several inches taller, heavier, and obviously would be their spokesperson.

I turned back to the delivery man. "And once again, can you describe this man?"

"He was about average height and weight. He had a lot of hair, a big nose, and a heavy mustache. He was carrying a zipper bag and he wore gloves. I noticed the gloves because it's summer and who wears gloves?"

"You have a keen eye, my good man," I said.

He blushed a bit. "I've been thinking about joining the force. There isn't too much future delivering pizzas."

There was that word again. Pizza. I pondered. Ah, at last I had it! I took Ralph back into the kitchen and lowered my voice. "Ralph, there is more here than meets the eye."

"More what?"

I opened the refrigerator. "Ralph, what do you see in there?"

He looked at me first and then peered. "A jar of mayonnaise, half a head of lettuce, three radishes on a saucer, a dozen eggs, margarine, four oranges, a bunch of celery."

I opened the freezer compartment. "And in here?"

"Couple of cans of concentrated frozen orange juice, package of frozen cauliflower, package of frozen strawberries—"

I held up a cease-and-desist hand. "Ralph, what do you *not* see in either the refrigerator proper or in the freezer compartment?"

He looked again. "What don't I see?"

I gave him another chance by opening one of the cupboards. "What do you observe in here?"

He sighed. "Two cans of cherry-pie filler, one of blueberry. Two large cans of tomato juice. Two cans of pineapple slices, and about a dozen cans of soup."

"Ah, but what *kinds* of soup?"

He checked. "Cream of Mushroom, Cream of Asparagus, Green Pea."

I smiled. "Why is there no Chicken Noodle?"

He stared at the cans. "All right, Henry, why is there no Chicken Noodle?"

"Because it has chicken in it."

Ralph waited, somehow dangerously.

"Ralph, did you not notice that there is not one single bit of *meat* in the refrigerator? No cold cuts, no steaks, no lamb chops, no hamburger. And in the canned goods collection there is not one can which harbors a scrap of meat. And I defy you to find a typical American household boasting a dozen cans of soup which does not include at least one Chicken Noodle."

Ralph still did not comprehend my point.

"Ralph, our murder victim, Miss Baumgartner, is, or more correctly, was, a *vegetarian*."

Ralph pondered skeptically. "I saw a carton of eggs in the refrigerator. I thought vegetarians don't eat eggs."

"Ralph, most people regard vegetarianism as a monolith. However, it is not. There are those vegetarians who eat dairy products and there are those who do not. There are those who consume fish, and those who do not. And there are those who eat eggs and those who do not."

"Gosh," Ralph said.

I nodded wisely. "I have an uncle who is a purist. He has such a terrific reverence for life that he will not eat even a lettuce leaf unless it has died a natural death."

"All right," Ralph said, "so the victim was a vegetarian. What the hell has that got to do with the murder?"

"Ralph," I said somberly, "it is the very crux of our case. Why would a vegetarian order a pizza which contains meat, namely sausage?"

"I give up. Why?"

"The answer is that she *wouldn't*."

"Then who ordered the damn pizza?"

"Her murderer, Ralph. And it is the one mistake he made. He either did not *know*, or was not *told*, that his victim was a vegetarian, and this will prove his undoing."

Ralph has lately developed the habit of closing his eyes for moments at a time. "Henry, why the hell would the murderer want to order a pizza?"

"To establish the *time* of the murder. Does it not strike you as a shaky coincidence that our murderer should leap out of the apartment at the very moment that the pizza man has come to make his delivery? And does not his described physiognomy—bushy hair, large nose, and heavy mustache—shout of *disguise*?"

I waited for Ralph to absorb this and then continued, "Ralph, our

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murderer killed Miss Baumgartner and then calmly went through the process of making it appear as though it had been the work of a burglar caught by surprise. That done, he phoned for a pizza. He waited at the slightly opened door until he saw the pizza man leave the elevator and approach. Then he rushed out of the apartment, thoughtfully leaving the door open behind him, and theatrically bumped into the pizza man to gain his attention."

"Why would this murderer want to go through all that trouble?"

"To establish the time of the murder."

"You said that once before, Henry. Why would he want to establish the time of the murder?"

"Because he was a *hired* killer."

"Oh, Lord," Ralph said.

"Ralph, did you not notice that our burglar-murderer left behind three of Miss Baumgartner's *uncashed* paychecks?"

"Why not? They were useless to him. How could he cash them?"

"Ralph," I said, "look about you. This is a rather spacious apartment in a relatively plush middle-class neighborhood. Do you think that a woman who appears to have had a job paying barely above the minimum wage would be able to *afford* living in a place like this? And not only afford it, but so much so that she does not even bother to cash her paychecks until they accumulate sufficiently so as to make the trouble worthwhile?"

"Okay, Henry. So somebody pays her rent and more. What's all this got to do with the murder?"

"It is the old, old story, Ralph. I do not, as yet, know the exact motive. Perhaps he tired of her and was about to cast her off, but she refused to be cast. Or possibly she had decided to blackmail him. Or always had. But whatever the reason, he determined that the time had come to get rid of her. Permanently. Therefore he hired a professional killer to do the job."

I led Ralph back into the living room and now approached the superintendent and his wife. I introduced myself. "Detective Sergeant Henry Turnbuckle. MPD." I lowered my voice so as to soften the blow. "Madam, are you aware that this murder victim, this Miss Baumgartner, was a *kept* woman?"

Mrs. Franklin folded her rather massive arms. "Mister, half the women in this place are kept. And I could point out a few men too."

"Madam," I said, wondering, "how long has Miss Baumgartner occupied this apartment?"

"About two years."

"What can you tell me about her?"

She shrugged. "She was the real friendly type. Whenever she heard me vacuuming the hall runner, she'd open the door and come out to talk. She used to be real lonely and die to have someone to talk to."

I seized three words. "Used to be?"

Mrs. Franklin nodded. "She'd even come downstairs to our apartment on some excuse or other just to talk for a while. Finally I said why didn't she just get a job. And she said she didn't have to get a job because she was independently provided for. And I said I don't mean a job for the money, but just so you can get out and meet people instead of just sitting in the apartment all day waiting for weekends. So she got this job with Zander Plumbing. She was a parts clerk. She said the pay was awful, but the people she worked with were friendly."

Mrs. Franklin wiped at a small teardrop. "I guess I was probably the last person to see her alive—besides the murderer, of course. She came downstairs to get change—quarters for the washing machine—and we talked a little. I told her she ought to get herself a new laundry basket because hers was falling apart and she said that she was holding out for wicker, but they were hard to find and they cost an arm and a leg. And then she went downstairs and that was the last time I saw her alive."

"Madam," I said, "during the course of these conversations with you, did she perhaps mention the name of her benefactor? Or benefactors?"

She nodded. "His name was Smith."

"Ah," I said. "And perhaps she mentioned a first name?"

"She called him Johnny."

I rubbed my hands. "Now we are getting somewhere."

Ralph closed his eyes again.

"Madam," I said, "during the course of these two years here, did she mention any other name? Was there anyone else besides John Smith?"

"She didn't fool around. There was just Johnny."

"And what did Johnny Smith look like?"

"He was a little on the elderly side. I mean in good shape and all, but about fifty and gray at the temples. Good dresser and he had a big car."

"Well, Ralph," I said. "We have our man. The instigator of the murder."

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Ralph sighed. "John Smith?"

I chuckled. "Ralph, you are living in another time, another decade. In this more sophisticated day, no one would even *think* of assuming any name like John Smith as an alias. It just isn't done. Therefore I think we must face the fact that John Smith actually *is* the name of our man."

Ralph rubbed the back of his neck, another habit.

"Ralph, if our Miss Baumgartner was intimately acquainted with John Smith and doubted his name, would she not at least have had some curiosity? Would she not in two years have managed to get a peek at his driver's license? When he was asleep, of course. And surely, discovering his true identity, would she not have accidentally let that information—or possibly the name itself—slip out in her many conversations with Mrs. Franklin? Or would she not at least have slyly hinted that she was well aware that John Smith was not his true name?"

Ralph rubbed the back of his neck. He searched for and found the white-pages volume of the phone book. He paged to the Smiths, zeroing in on the Johns. He appeared to count and then looked up. "Thirty-six John Smiths. That still gives us a big job trying to find him."

I smiled tolerantly. "Ralph, you are not thinking. Miss Baumgartner was a kept woman. And *keeping* a woman can be more expensive than keeping a wife, can it not?"

Ralph shrugged. "I wouldn't know. So I look at the addresses behind the John Smiths and toss out those who live in crummy neighborhoods?"

"That is the negative approach, Ralph. And besides, one cannot be expected to know all the street names in the crummy neighborhoods of a city this size. No, Ralph, look for the *good* addresses, or more specifically, those addresses which are in our more *affluent* suburbs."

Ralph ran a finger down the column. "West Allis? No. Greenfield? No. Bay View? No." He stopped and looked up. "Fox Point?"

"*Voila!*" I exclaimed aptly.

I sat down at the phone. "I believe I shall give this John Smith a tentative exploratory phone call. A butler will undoubtedly answer."

"A butler?"

"Certainly, Ralph. People who live in Fox Point can afford butlers."

"Don't butlers have eight-hour days? This is almost ten at night."

"He would be on duty because of the party."

"What party?"

"Ralph, if you are going to have a murder committed for you and you want an absolutely ironclad alibi for the time of the victim's death, what better method could you choose than to have a party at your home? Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of people would be available to swear that you never left the house." I dialed. "Either it's a party, or, if our man shies at the expense, a card game. An intimate card game with a trio of blue-ribbon citizens. The game would be bridge."

The phone at the other end of the line rang. I held the receiver several inches from my ear so that Ralph could be privy to the conversation.

A woman answered.

I frowned. "What happened to the butler?"

"What butler?"

"Ah, you are the housekeeper?"

"What housekeeper?"

"Madam," I said, "this is Fox Point, is it not?"

"Right, sonny."

I chuckled. "How's the party going?"

"What party?"

I persisted. "All right. How's the card game? Who's winning?"

"What card game?"

"Madam," I said stiffly, "just what is Mr. Smith doing at this moment?"

"He's asleep."

I blinked. "This early? Alone?"

"Of course alone. What do you expect from a man who's ninety-two? One of Charlie's angels?"

"Who is this speaking?" I demanded.

"Belinda. His daughter. Look, sonny, if this is going to be an obscene phone call, get on with the nitty-gritty. I may be sixty-eight, but I've still got a twinkle in my eye."

I hung up. "Ralph, there is something grossly awry here."

"Awry?"

"Wrong."

The pizza delivery man shifted his feet. "Is it all right if I finish delivering the pizza now?"

I froze. "Delivering the pizza?"

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He nodded. "To apartment 469. It's down the corridor, then to the right, and at the end of the hall. Regular customers."

I felt distinctly empty. "Just one moment, my good man. Are you telling me that your miserable meat-ridden pizza was not intended for this apartment?"

"No. Like I said, I come out of the elevator when this man comes rushing out of here and leaves the door open. So naturally I can't help seeing the body and at a time like that you don't think about completing your delivery." He regarded the cardboard box skeptically. "On the other hand, it's probably cold now and they won't accept it. I mean, what can you do with a cold pizza?"

I very nearly told him.

Instead, Ralph and I took him to headquarters where we had him go through our mug books until he identified one Arnold McNab—a man with bushy hair, a large nose, and a shoe-brush mustache. We immediately sent out flyers.

McNab, an often caught burglar, was once again apprehended three days later when an alert pawnbroker phoned the police as McNab attempted to pawn Miss Baumgartner's jewelry.

Faced with the possession of the jewels and the identification by the pizza delivery man, McNab elected to confess.

He claimed self-defense, stating that she had attacked him with the laundry detergent bottle, which, under the stress of the moment, he had mistaken for a green club.

Ralph and I booked him and then signed out for the day.

"Ralph," I said, "it has suddenly come upon me that I have been intensely parochial. Why did I limit my search for John Smith to the Milwaukee metropolitan area? After all, he appeared only on weekends and therefore could easily have commuted from Madison, Kenosha, or even Sheboygan."

"Henry," Ralph said, "it doesn't matter who or where he is. John Smith had nothing to do with the murder. Put it out of your mind."

His eyes seemed perfectly innocent. "Henry, let me treat you to a pizza."

I turned that down. But we did go to a bar where I had two stiff sherrys and tried to forget.

"Q"